INCOMING TELEGRAM *Department of State* ACTION COPY

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EXCISE

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Info

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO RUHHHQA/CINCPAC PRIORITY
STATE GRNC
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1967 JUN 30 AM 1 57

S E C R E T SAIGON 29140

EXDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF : STATE 218519, 218581; SAIGON 29132

1. WE HAVE NOW OBTAINED PRELIMINARY REPORTS ON A MARATHON MEETING OF PARTS OR ALL OF THE ARMED FORCES COUNCIL JUNE 29. MEETING CONTINUED UNTIL ABOUT MIDNIGHT LAST NIGHT AND IS RESUMING THIS MORNING.

2. [ ] YESTERDAY'S MEETING AND [ ] MEETING OF THE GENERALS THE PRECEDING NIGHT (SAIGON 29152) CONFIRMED THAT THESE MEETINGS WERE DEVOTED

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ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO THE QUESTION OF THE "POSITIONS OF THE TWO GENERALS". IT HAS BEEN CONFIRMED THAT THE JUNE 29 DECISION ON BIG MINH, WHICH HAS NOW BEEN ANNOUNCED, WAS FINAL AND THAT HE WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO RETURN TO RUN FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

3. THE REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE MILITARY MEMBERS OF THE DIRECTORATE THE NIGHT OF JUNE 28 WAS, ACCORDING TO OUR PRESENT SOURCE, A MUCH STORMIER AND MORE EMOTIONAL SESSION THAN WAS REPORTED BY THE [ ] IN THE COURSE OF THE MEETING THIEU WAS SAID TO HAVE BROKEN DOWN AND WEPT. AT ONE POINT KY REPORTEDLY MADE AN OFFER IN THE HEAT OF THE DISCUSSION TO STEP DOWN.

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4. THE MEETINGS ON JUNE 29 WERE ORIGINALLY IN THE BROADER BODY OF THE ARMED FORCES COUNCIL BUT IT APPEARS THAT SOME OF THE DISCUSSIONS WERE AMONG A MORE RESTRICTED NUMBER OF

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Susan Isenberg DATE 10/7/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

Saigon 29140 to 26054 6/30/67

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GENERALS, PRESUMABLY THE MILITARY MEMBERS OF THE DIRECTORATE. IN ANY CASE, THESE SESSIONS WERE DEVOTED PRIMARILY TO ATTEMPTING TO FIND A SOLUTION ON THE CANDIDACY QUESTION WHICH COULD BE

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ACCEPTED BY BOTH THIEU AND KY AND WHICH COULD BE APPROVED BY THE OTHER LEADING GENERALS. IT APPEARS FROM OUR ACCOUNT THAT MUCH OF THE DISCUSSION CENTERED ON WHAT COULD BE WORKED OUT FOR THIEU ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT HE WOULD STEP ASIDE AS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. THE SOLUTION THAT REPORTEDLY WAS EMERGING TOWARDS MIDNIGHT LAST NIGHT WAS FOR THIEU TO ASSUME THE POSITION AS CHIEF OF THE JGS, AND POSSIBLY ALSO THE DEFENSE MINISTRY, IF KY WERE ELECTED AS PRESIDENT. GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN WAS APPARENTLY PREPARED TO STEP ASIDE FOR THIS PURPOSE. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY WAS FOR THIEU TO TAKE OVER ONLY AS CHIEF JGS WITH VIEN REMAINING AS DEFENSE MINISTER, BUT IT WAS RECOGNIZED THAT THIS MIGHT POSE "PRESTIGE" PROBLEMS FOR THIEU SINCE VIEN WOULD BE TECHNICALLY HIS SUPERIOR. ACCORDING TO OUR ACCOUNT THE MATTER WAS LEFT MORE OR LESS AT THIS POINT, SUBJECT TO FURTHER DISCUSSION TODAY.

5. A SOURCE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE TOLD US THIS MORNING THAT THERE WAS NO TRUTH IN THE RUMOR THAT KY MIGHT STEP DOWN AND ADDED THAT THERE WOULD BE A PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THIS MORNING'S MEETING (AS OF 11 A.M. THE MEETING HAD NOT YET STARTED).

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6. WE HAVE HAD A REPORT FROM ANOTHER SOURCE, WHO WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE MILITARY MEETINGS BUT WHO HAS BEEN A KY SUPPORTER, THAT THERE WAS DISCUSSION IN THE COURSE OF THE MEETING YESTERDAY AS TO WHETHER PRIME MINISTER KY SHOULD STEP DOWN FROM HIS OFFICE DURING THE PERIOD PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS. ANOTHER UNCONFIRMED REPORT THIS MORNING, FROM OPPOSITION SOURCES, IS WHAT A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT WITH GENERAL P. X. CHIEU (NOW IN SEOUL) AS CHIEF OF STATE-WOULD BE ESTABLISHED FOR THIS INTERIM PERIOD. WE HAVE NO SUPPORTING EVIDENCE OF THIS AND KY'S SENIOR ADVISOR, TRUONG THAI TON, TENDED TO DISCOUNT IT AND SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE MEETINGS WERE DIRECTED AT REVOLVING THE CANDIDACY QUESTION.

6. COMMENT: THE ONLY THING THAT SEEMS CLEAR FROM ALL THESE CONFLICTING REPORTS IS THAT NOTHING WAS FINALLY DECIDED

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LAST NIGHT ALTHOUGH THE LINES OF A POSSIBLE SOLUTION MIGHT HAVE BEGUN TO EMERGE. AT LEAST THERE SEEMS TO BE EVIDENCE THAT THE RESPONSIBLE MEMBERS OF THE DIRECTORATE ARE MAKING SOME EFFORT TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE PROBLEM. WE WILL REPORT ADDITIONAL INFO AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE TODAY.

BUNKER
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NOTE: ADVANCE COPY TO S/S-O, WHITE HOUSE, 6/30/67 - 2:14 A.M.

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